mitted. Again there were three grilling sessions. The successful examinees were rewarded with the title of *chin shih.* Those emerging with the highest credit were honored by additional designations. Still another examination was held, theoretically in the presence of the Emperor and on a theme set by him, which resulted in further grading the *chin shih.*

Chin shih who passed with the greatest distinction were usually given posts iii the *Hanlin Yuan,* in itself no mean honor, and all were either awarded official posts or were placed on the list of "expectant officials" from which appointments were to be made. *Chu jen* who had been unsuccessful in their efforts to enter the ranks of the *chin shih* might either attempt the examination again or be appointed to office after meeting tests which were presumably somewhat less exacting.

The subject matter of the examinations was largely Chinese literature, chiefly that of the Confucian school. Most of them consisted of composing essays and poems on topics selected from this literature. *fhe essays and poems were required to conform to decidedly aWScial standards and were judged by the criteria of style rather than of originality of thought. Yet questions of a -practical kind were also among those asked, at least at the end of the Ming.

The competition was much more keen than any to which we are ^accustomed in educational tests in the Occident. Only a small percentage of the contestants at each of the successive examinations achieved the coveted degrees. Of those who presented themselves for the *chu jen* at any one time, only one out of fifteen or more was successful, and of those who sat for the *chin shih* usually much fewer than one in ten. The number ad-

mitted to the degree of *chin shih* in any one year was seldom more than three hundred and fifty and as a rule much less. Candidates often tried again and again, and occasionally a grandfather, father, and son came together. While in many instances younger men attained the rank of *chin shih,* the median age was somewhere in the thirties.

The defects of the system were obvious—the absorption in purely verbal mattes, the premium upon memory and upon ability to write according to the standards of an arbitrary literary style, rather than upon originality or vigor of thought and promise